



Grace Church of West Feliciana Parish

"A loving congregation seeking unity with God and each other in Christ"

Newsletter

May 28 & June 4, 2017

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Our Song at the Grave

"All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."

These familiar words come from The Commendation in our Book of Common Prayer service for the Burial of the Dead (BCP 499). Here at Grace, we've adopted the custom of printing the full liturgy for funerals in individually tailored service bulletins. In the general template we use for those bulletins, these words from The Commendation are also found on the front cover, positioned above a picture of an open and empty tomb/cave. Over the last few months, we've printed many iterations of this service bulletin. Indeed, too many. I suspect I am not the only one feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer number of funerals we've had in our community.

It's a jarring juxtaposition for this Easter season. Walk through the church grounds, warmed by the sunlight of these wonderfully long spring days, listen to the cheerful sounds of birdcalls, observe new life and growth in the flora – and throughout the scene there's also the unmistakable signs of death, recent deaths – fresh evidence of mourning, grief, and loss. Muddy patches of bare earth where the surrounding grasses have not returned - scattered floral arrangements standing sentry near the spot, now beginning to wilt. And inside, hiding in the crevices of the pews, half-folded, rolled-up copies of service bulletins with "alleluia, alleluia, alleluia" printed on the front.

Why sing alleluias at the grave? The song is both a proclamation of faith and an act of defiance - a denial of death's ultimacy, its finality. In the sure and certain hope of the resurrection, we make our song "alleluia" - i.e. "praise the Lord." Anticipating that day when we'll boldly proclaim - O Death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?

And yet - here and now - we cannot deny we feel the loss. Here and now, we suffer the sting. We grieve. And that is no affront to our faith. The Prayer Book notes that, although the liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy, and therefore characterized by joy - this joy "does not make grief unchristian. The very love we have for each other in Christ brings deep sorrow when we are parted by death. Jesus himself wept at the grave of his friend. So, while we rejoice that one we love has entered into the nearer presence of our Lord, we sorrow in sympathy with those who mourn" (BCP 507).

I think, in our society today, we have a problem with grief. By that I mean, we don't know how to deal with grief's reality - with its power - with its facticity. At best, we treat it as something that must be overcome - or passed through, in progressive stages. We do not acknowledge or accept that grief may – and perhaps should – remain, an irreducible facet of our lived reality. So, we generally direct our counseling efforts toward helping mourners "feel better," to not "be sad" and "get over it." We encourage them "accept" the loss and thus "be at peace" with death. Within religious circles, we often offer platitudes - "he's in a better place," "everything happens for a reason," "God needed her up there more than we did down here." But, really, I don't think such attempts can actually offer solace to a person truly grieving the death of a loved one - and though well meaning, I fear, might be woefully misguided - potentially driving people away from intentional engagements with God and supportive communities of faith.

For the last few weeks, I've been pondering and trying to think through some of these issues while re-reading the amazing little book, *Lament For A Son*, by Nicholas Wolterstorff.

Wolterstorff, a distinguished theologian and professor at Yale University, slowly composed this “song” of *Lament* after his 25 year-old son, Eric, died in a mountain-climbing accident. Its series of short notes and reflections provide a simple, honest, and powerfully raw expression of a father’s grief - one that remains utterly faithful to the Gospel, while unabashedly facing and openly struggling with very real, inevitably inexplicable, questions about suffering and death. So, for example, he confesses:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and resurrector of Jesus Christ. I also believe that my son’s life was cut off in its prime. I cannot fit these pieces together. I am at a loss. I have read the theodicies produced to justify the ways of God to man. I find them unconvincing. To the most agonized question I have ever asked I do not know the answer. I do not know why God would watch him fall. I do not know why God would watch me wounded. I can not even guess.

I think admitting ignorance - that we do not know, and cannot even guess - a reason for such horrible events is the most honest and faithful way we can respond to the problems of suffering and death. Indeed, we cannot and should not try to “solve” such problems with conjectured rationales. Even the most clever explanation cannot erase the awful truth. For us, here and now, the realities of suffering and death must remain a problem.

Re-reading this book, I was struck by Wolterstorff’s repeated claim: “Death is demonic.” Within the terms of Christian theology, death is not something we are meant to accept or be a peace with. Death is not part of the originally created order. It is an aberration, an outgrowth of our fallen condition - something to be defeated, overcome, removed from reality. Wolterstorff notes that “when the writer of *Revelation* spoke of the coming of the day of shalom, he did not say that on that day we would live at peace with death. He said that on that day ‘There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”

It can take a while to wrap your head around Wolterstorff’s articulation of grief and the nature of death and what it might mean for us. It seems so unfamiliar - and yet, to me at least, so refreshing and true. We must grieve. We must lament. We must be shamelessly open and honest in our struggles - with God, with our faith. For, in so doing, we may, like Wolterstorff, find that “through the prism of my tears I have seen a suffering God” - and more fully know the “great mystery” - “to redeem our brokenness and lovelessness the God who suffers with us did not strike some mighty blow of power but sent his beloved son to suffer *like us*, through his suffering to redeem us from suffering and evil. Instead of explaining our suffering God shares it.” The healing that comes from this great mystery does not erase our pain, but it can transform it. For, over time, in the end, “every lament is a love song.”

Twelve years after first publishing the book, Wolterstorff remarked: “Rather often I am asked whether the grief remains as intense as when I wrote. The answer is, No. The wound is no longer raw. But it has not disappeared. That is as it should be. If he was worth loving, he is worth grieving over. Grief is existential testimony to the worth of the one loved. That worth abides.”

St. Paul explains, in the body of Christ, “if one member suffers, all suffer together.” Please know that if you are currently grieving the loss of a loved one, we at Grace are here for you - and will be with you, at your side, through it all. And if ever you need someone to talk to or just a listening ear, please do not hesitate to call me. In Christ, Fr. Peter+

Richard Rohr is having a presentation on “The Trinity” in New Orleans on Friday, Dec 1 & Saturday Dec. 2. We will be using his “Alternative Orthodoxy” for the Fall Bible Study which begins September 6th. Several members are planning to attend his event in New Orleans, which begins on Friday night 6:30-8:30pm and continues the next day with 2 sessions, 9 to Noon and 1 pm to 3pm. We will rent a van to go down and will stay overnight. We are purchasing 10 tickets, at the advance price of \$75, (prices go up \$25 on June 1) so if you are interested, let Dixie Blue know (dixiewblue@gmail.com) 931-5431 if you’d like to buy one of these tickets. Sounds like a fun trip. Invite anyone who would be interested.

Missing: a French-white Corning-ware bowl that had Spinach Madeleine in it for Margie Sheets funeral. If you happened to take it home, please return it to the kitchen.

Men’s Prayer Breakfast is June 7 at 7am. Please join the group for a bible study and a delicious breakfast catered by the Audubon Café.

Intercessory prayers are asked for Grace Church members who are ill:

Matt Armstrong,
David Barnes, Jamey Daniel, Daisye Howell, Lucile Lawrason, Tom Morris, Eric Nelson, Sara Nelson, Kay Tengler, Sarah Roland, Eleanor Thomas, Wendell Wade, David Walker, Jake Wray, Madeline Wright.

Birthdays

Houston McVea, Cindy Robinson-May 28; Jeff Pruitt, Will Benton, Fiona Tully-May 29; Lorna Klein-May 31; Kathryn Ward-June 1; Ann Newton, Robert Fisher III, Luke Farmer-June 6; Lynda Truitt, John Emory Walker-June 8; Shondell Havard, Hugh Reid-June 9; Alyson Curry, Emile Pourciau-June 10.

Wedding

Anniversaries

Ricky and Chaille Lambert-May 28; Bobby and Sharon Wilson-June 1; Paul and Cary Fitzmorris, Russ and Rhona Wray, Rob and Christie Reinhardt, Kirk and Lisa Kleinpeter-June 2; Roy and Alma Ruth Skaggs-June 3; Charles and Louise Reichman-June 4; Chase and Steve Cunningham, Chris and Tara Grace Jones-June 6; Pat and Lucie Butler-June 7; Hugh and Ginger Reid-June 9; Glenn and Eleanor Thomas-June 10.

Other persons prayers are asked for:

Charles Barham, Walker Bell, Micaela Kell Bennett, Morris Bennett, Leslie Bickham, Phillip Bowen, Leo Brown, Ben Brown, Steve Brown, Willie Bryant, Randy Bryant, Mac Bullock, John Caruthers, Jenny Clark, Kitty Claus, Bob Crowley, Kathleen Davis, Debbie Desmar, Helen Desselles, Cathy Doslovic, Molly Douglas, Mark Ellison, Jennifer Erickson, Mark Feltner, Dennis Flynn, Matthew Gill, Roy Hardin, Parke Henderson, Wayne Hudnall, Joel James, Michelle Jean-sonne, Jill Joffrion, Henry Jones, Mary Jo Kaly, Cecil Kelly, Jody Lemoine, Bob Lewis, Jessica Liddle, Max, Paul McGuff, Ralph McKenzie, Laine Martrain, Kathy Drew Matter, Mary Anne McCrory, Ruby McKee, David Merritt, Robin Michel, Dorothy Anne Millikin, Jimmy Mitchell, Rusty Melton, Randall Nachman, Barton Platte, Cecelia Polito, Susanna Prescott, Susan Pray, Carol Ratcliff, Tammy Riggs, Cole Rourke, Stephen Seale, Gwin Shanks, Kaizlyn Shockley, Cade Stapleton, Roland Toups, Denham Turner, Darold Whitmer, Zane Woodward.

Those serving in the armed forces: Parker Blanche, Amanda Browning, James Boucher, Jay Christopher, Ryan Coacher, Ben Colia, John Davis, Joseph Dooley, Bryan Geltz, Edward Jenkins, Laura Latson, Shawn Lemons, Terry Palmer, James Powers, Jeff Ragsa, Christopher Willis, Matthew Young, 745th & 746th Exped Squads,

Grace Youth Group is collecting items to make Blessing Bags for the homeless that we will deliver to Project Lot on June 10th. Please drop off items to Meg Kendrick's office in Jackson Hall. Last drop off day will be June 7th as we will be assembling the bags at youth group that evening. See the list on the Jackson Hall bulletin board for the specific items we are looking for including deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, feminine hygiene products, fingernail clippers, chap stick, band aids, hand sanitizer, socks, blue jeans, jackets, blankets, hand towels, tennis shoes, reading glasses, backpacks, granola bars and gift cards (we play bingo and hand out \$5 gift cards to winners.) Suggested restaurants are McDonalds and Raising Canes. Others welcome, just make sure there is a location near downtown Baton Rouge) If you have questions, call Meg at 635-4065 ext 213.

Pentecost Sunday is June 4. This is Grace Church's patronal feast day and we celebrate with a picnic after church. Rucker and Susan Leake have volunteered their home (9733 Charlotte Armstrong) to host the picnic. Grace Church provides fried chicken, lemonade and water and everyone brings a dish to share. Bring your swimming suits and lawn chairs to sit in.

Thank you! The family of Margie Sheets would like to express their sincere gratitude to all of her Grace Church family for the special reception they hosted. There were simply too many to mention. "Ruth 1:8. May the Lord reward you for your kindness."

Vacation Bible School is coming July 10 - 14, 2017! *Maker Fun Factory* promises to be a fun and Grace-filled week! There will be games, projects, songs, and delicious snacks. The registration link is on our website now: www.gracechurchwfp.org, on our website. If you would like to volunteer, please call Christie Reinhardt or Meg Kendrick at 635-4065 or email youth@gracechurchwfp.org. A needs-board for donated items, supplies, snacks, and materials for the week will be posted in the narthex of the church. And thank you in advance for your support!



Welcome to new members, Kenneth and Judy Miller and their daughter Whitney, who transferred from Redeemer Lutheran Church in Baytown, Texas.

Babysitters: Some of our babysitters have graduated and some will be gone for the summer, which leaves us with only five teenagers to cover the nursery on Sundays. If you have a teenager who is interested in babysitting, age 12 or older, please find out if they would like to do this part time job. We need two babysitters each Sunday, and they must watch the Safeguarding God's Children video and be CPR/First-aid trained. Give me a call at the Church as I am working on the summer schedule now. Thanks, Anne Klein

Our high school graduates: This past Sunday we honored our seniors who recently graduated: Shelby Griffin and Kristen Lyon were each awarded a Folkes/Bankston scholarship. The Lindsay Weller Scholarship was awarded to Shelby Griffin and the Verger's scholarship was also awarded to Shelby. Congratulations to these two youth who have completed their high school education.



The Super Senior's Annual Pilgrimage to Middendorf's was a lot of fun. The church rented a van so the group could travel together. Going on the excursion were Carol Woodward, Suzanne Beckley, Barbara Mitchell, Maria Gerry, Chris Roldan, Trish and Bob Toburen and the talented chauffeur, Fr. Roldan.

Grace Church
of West Feliciana Parish
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Sunday Ministry Assistants & Calendar

Sunday, May 28, 2017

Acolytes: Elizabeth Hughes, R E Barrow,
Madison Pollet, Karina Mulkey,
Logan Reinhardt, Nicole Mulkey
Chalice bearers: 7:30am: Carol Stamey
10am: Landon Anderson, Sara Klein
Ushers: Kelly Ward, Carl Fontenot
Lectors: Will Plettinger, Beverly Walker
Vestry Rep: Sue Steib
Altar Guild Team 3
Altar flowers: David and Beverly Walker
Sanctuary Candle: Tommy and Stacy Loyacono
Coffee Hour: Justin and Charlotte Peno
Babysitters: Madie Kane, Emma Olsen

Sunday, June 4, 2017

Acolytes: Emma Olsen, Charles Fox-Smith,
Ella Corinne Howle, James Kirschling,
Wyatt Olsen, Ethan Lyon
Chalice bearers 7:30am: Lucie Butler
10am: Rucker Leake, Mark Mulkey
Ushers: Tony Horn, Zed Howell
Lectors: Donna Wright, Landon Anderson
Vestry Rep: Adam Whatley
Altar Guild Team 4
Altar flowers: Colleen Hill & Jeanne Marie Hill
Sanctuary candle: Bobby & Jane Daniel
Coffee Hour: Church Picnic
Babysitters: Lorna Klein, Shelby Griffin

May 28, 2017

7:30am - Eucharist
Bible Study
10:00am - Eucharist
Coffee Hour

June 4, 2017

7:30am - Holy Eucharist
Bible Study
10:00am - Holy Eucharist
Pentecost Picnic at the
home of Rucker and Susan
Leake

Wednesday, May 31

5:15pm - Eucharist
5 - 7pm - Youth Group

Thursday, June 1

9:15am - Morning Prayer
10:00am - Worship: SF Country Manor

Friday, June 2

7:00am - Eucharist
8:30am - Lectionary Bible Study

Sunday, June 4

7:30am - Eucharist
9:15am - Bible Study
10:00am - Eucharist

Pentecost Picnic: Rucker/Susan Leake's

Wednesday, June 7

7:00am - Men's Prayer Breakfast
5:15pm - Eucharist
5-7pm - Youth Group

Thursday, June 8

9:15am - Morning Prayer
10:00am - Worship: SF Country Manor

Friday, June 9

7:00am - Eucharist
8:30am - Lectionary Bible Study